

## Congressman Brian Baird Tackles Global Warming (June 16, 2008)

### Views Cutting Edge Research Being Done by Washington Scientists in the Galapagos Islands

Washington, D.C.-

El Nino, dead zones, ocean acidification, global warming and climate change: These aren't words out of some science book; but rather terms that impact millions of Washingtonians on a daily basis. Cutting edge research on such issues is being done in the Galapagos Islands, a unique place where several ecosystems collide, and where scientists agree the effects of the climate crisis will be felt first, and worst. For this reason, Congressman Brian Baird (D-WA-03) led a congressional delegation to the region, to meet with National Science Foundation funded experts searching for solutions. Their conclusions will direct our nation's efforts in addressing the dire conditions that threaten our ecosystem and our future.

"The

climate crisis facing the world is no joke, and closing our eyes to the problems created by it doesn't make them go away," said Congressman Baird. "Our oceans are under assault, and these world class scientists are looking for answers. This search isn't an esoteric exercise; these answers will eventually help us all."

While in the Galapagos, Congressman Baird met with Dr. Julian Sachs, Associate Professor of Chemical Oceanography at the University of Washington, and a National Science Foundation funded climate change researcher. Dr. Sachs is currently conducting sediment coring on the Floreana Island in order to better understand El Niño events which impact the Islands every two to seven years.

During

El Niño years the environmental changes that take place are similar to the changes projected to occur in a warmer future. Rainfall patterns, local climate, ocean temperature, ocean currents, nutrient availability, and ocean productivity are all altered for the duration of the event.

"El Nino years can be disastrous for Southwest Washington, specifically for our fishing and shellfish industries. While it might seem hard to believe, what's happening thousands of miles away in the Galapagos today, will directly affect fishermen on the west coast. Already our fishing communities have suffered catastrophic losses in recent years due to the collapse of fisheries, in part, because of the deterioration of ocean conditions worldwide," added Congressman Baird.

Baird also visited Santa Cruz Island to observe work being done to understand the impacts of invasive species on the native species to the Galapagos Islands, a problem that also chokes the water off the coast of Washington. The information gleaned from Galapagos research can benefit domestic agricultural, conservation, and scientific efforts.

#### Management

of fisheries and marine resources conservation is another significant scientific endeavor at the research station in conjunction with the Galapagos National Park Service. As Chair of the Science Subcommittee of Energy and Environment, which is responsible for funding research affecting national ocean and domestic resources, Congressman Baird was also able to discuss the approach Galapagos scientists, fishermen, and local businesses have taken to develop sound management plans for these resources. The results of the international cooperative research conducted on the islands can help to better manage the natural resources found in the United States.

"In

just three days we were able to gather expert testimony that will provide the foundation we need to move forward as lawmakers in providing the support, the direction and the leadership to address these critical issues. What is happening in the Galapagos has a direct bearing on what will happen along the west coast unless we take action. It's my job to protect our precious resources," concluded Baird.

see the detailed itinerary for the trip

Read Brian's thoughts about the trip

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